

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAMA 01020 081639Z

43

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INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L 1020

EXDIS

KUWAIT PASS DOHA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, SA, BA

SUBJECT : EASTERN PROVINCE "SUMMIT"; THE GULF
AND BEYOND

1. EVENING DECEMBER 7 WAS FIRST OPPORTUNITY GOB FOREIGN MINISTER HAD TO SEE ME SINCE HE RETURNED FROM ACCOMPANYING AMIR TO EASTERN PROVINCE MEETING WITH KING FAISAL. COMMENTING AT LENGTH ON VISIT, WHICH HE CONSIDERED MOST SUCCESSFUL, HE TOOK PAINS TO STRESS, AS HAD DEVELOPMENT MINISTER SHIRAWI PREVIOUSLY, THAT THE GATHERING WAS NOT A "SUMMIT" AND WAS NOT EVEN A "MEETING". RATHER IT WAS AN EXCELLENT INFORMAL OPPORTUNITY FOR GULF LEADERS TO VISIT WITH SAUDIS, EXCHANGE VIEWS, AND WITNESS IMPRESSIVE SAUDI MILITARY DISPPQY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID SAG LEADERS WERE WILPUCP TO DISCUSS PROPOSED GOUHGWAY BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAMA 01020 081639Z

BAHRAIN BUT IT HAD BEEN DECIDED TO POSTPONE THESE

RATHER DETAILED DISCUSSIONS UNTIL EARLY NEXT YEAR WHEN APPROPRIATE GOB OFFICIALS WILL VISIT RIYADH FOR THIS PURPOSE.

3. I COULD NOT DRAW FOREIGN MINISTER OUT ON WHETHER HOWAR ISLAND PROBLEM BETWEEN QATAR AND BAHRAIN WAS DISCUSSED IN EASTERN PROVINCE. HE AND OTHER GOB OFFICIALS HAVE CONSTANTLY SOUGHT TO ASSURE ME GOB IN CONTINUING CONTACT WITH QATAR ABOUT THIS PROBLEM, THAT IT IS NOT A CRITICAL ONE, BUT THAT GOB WOULD LIKE TO RESOLVE IT SINCE IT POSES A MINOR OBSTACLE TO GREATER COOPERATION IN THE GULF.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID EASTERN PROVINCE MEETINGS PROVIDE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS, TO BETTER ORIENT KEY SAUDI LEADERS ON SITUATION IN THE GULF, ANDNEY URGE A GREATER SAUDI LEADERSHIP ROLE IN AREA. WITH ABU DHABI/SAUDI PROBLEMS SOLVED BAHRAINIS ARE OPTIMISTIC SAG WILL ACT WITH LESS ALOOFNESS AND WITH MORE EFFECT IN PROVIDING LEADERSHIP IN WHAT WILL BE LONG PROCESS TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE COOPERATION AMONG GULF STATES. FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT BOTH PRINCES FAHAD AND SULTAN WERE IN EASTERN PROVINCES TALKS.

HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WHILE SAUDI ATTITUDES TOWARD THE GULF IN LAST FEW YEARS HAS BEEN GENERALLY CONSTRUCTIVE SAG HAD DONE LITTLE TO ORGANIZE ITSELF TO PLAY EFFECTIVE ROLE. HE SAID THIS WAS UNDERSTANDABLE IN VIEW OF OTHER SAUDI PREOCCUPATIONS BUT HOPED THAT NOW THAT PRINCE NAWWAF NO LONGER APPARENTLY INVOLVED IN GULF AFFAIRS AND FAHAD AND SULTAN INTERESTED IN THEM, SAUDIS WILL DO MORE IN AREA.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER INDICATED SATISFACTION WITH OVERALL SITUATION IN AREA NOW THAT IRAN AND EGYPT ARE IN FRIENDLY, CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP AND SAUDI ARABIA ON GOOD TERMS WITH BOTH. IN HIS VIEW THIS WILL PERMIT SAUDIS TO BE MORE ACTIVE IN SMALLER GULF STATES WITHOUT FEAR OF POLITICAL ATTACK FROM CAIRO. HE SAID GOB HAD STRESSED IN EASTERN PROVINCE TALKS IMPORTANCE OF MORE EFFECTIVE
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PAGE 03 MANAMA 01020 081639Z

ARAB/IRANIAN COOPERATION IN THE GULF IN FUTURE, BUT AT SAME TIME HAD CAUTIONED THERE WAS REALLY LITTLE SAUDI ARABIA AND GULF ARABS CAN DO TO COOPERATE WITH IRAN UNTIL COOPERATION MORE EFFECTIVE AMONG THE GULF ARABS THEMSELVES.

6. WHEN I NOTED CONTINUING USG INTEREST IN SEEING GREATER COOPERATION AMONG GULF STATES FOREIGN MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED

APPARENT HARMONY BETWEEN U.S. POLICY IN GULF AND LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF GULF STATES THEMSELVES. HE CONTINUED THAT WHILE U.S. POLICY TOWARD GULF IS BOTH CONSTRUCTIVE AND APPRECIATED "YOU CERTAINLY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR YOUR FRIENDS INsofar AS U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY IS CONCERNED." HE PROCEEDED LIGHTLY OVER FAMILIAR GROUND NOTING PARTICULARLY A CONVERSATION HE HAD WITH FAHMI IN RABAT IN WHICH EGYPTIAN HAD LAMENTED WHAT HE FEELS IN U.S. UNWILLINGNESS TO RESPOND TO ARAB NEED FOR CLOSER RELATIONS WITH U.S. NOTING RECENTLY ANNOUNCED FRENCH/SAUDI AGREEMENT FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE HAD IMPRESSION USG NOT DOING ALL THEY COULD TO CEMENT RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA. HE SEEMED TO ACCEPT MY REBUTTAL OF THIS. I SUGGESTED THAT ARAB AND WESTERN INTERESTS ARE BECOMING SO SIGNIFICANTLY INTER-DEPENDENT THAT U.S. AND ARABS NO LONGER HAVE OPTION OF NOT GETTING ALONG. THE PROBLEM IS THE QUALITY RATHER THAN THE EXISTENCE OF RELATIONS. HE AGREED. (COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST TIME FOREIGN MINISTER HAS PICKED UP RECENT LINE OF GOB PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSING CONCERN TO US PRIVATELY ABOUT U.S./SAUDI RELATIONS. USUALLY IN CONTEXT OF DANGER OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN OIL PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS. KEY BAHRAINIS HAVE FREQUENT CONTACTS WITH KEY SAG FIGURES BUT I FRANKLY CANNOT FATHOM WHETHER BAHRAINIS ARE TRYING TO LET US KNOW THAT SAUDIS ARE COMPLAINING TO THEM OR ARE SIMPLY FREE-WHEELING IN THEIR OWN SPECULATIVE ASSESSMENT OF U.S./SAUDI RELATIONS.

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